



## PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

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LAUNCHING OF THE NATIONAL APPEAL FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN-HELLENIC MEMORIAL  
CANBERRA - 1 APRIL 1987

Your Excellency, Your Eminence, Sir William Refshauge,  
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The last few weeks have been especially important ones for  
the Greek-Australian community.

Just over a fortnight ago, I had the pleasure of opening the  
Greek Australian Conference in Melbourne. This was an  
important conference, organised by the Victorian Government,  
the Greek Government and the Australian-Greek community and  
attended by a distinguished group of visitors from Greece  
including members of the Greek Cabinet and Parliament, and  
representatives of business and academia.

Last week it was Greek National Day, which was celebrated in  
Melbourne with the Antipodes Festival. This was the first  
time the Greek-Australian cultural experience had been  
celebrated in this form and it was a great pleasure for me  
to speak to a huge crowd in Lonsdale Street. The festival  
was a magnificent success, not just for Greek-Australians  
but for the whole community.

Then yesterday we saw Yiannis Kouros cross the finish line  
to win the Sydney to Melbourne ultra-marathon - and winning  
as well, I might add, the respect of sports lovers across  
Australia for a nearly superhuman performance. I am fully  
aware that the word "marathon" is rooted in Greek history  
but Yiannis Kouros' achievement of the past week I believe  
at least rivals that of the original marathon runner  
Pheidippides.

Tonight it is my pleasure to speak once more on an issue of  
concern to the Australian-Greek community - to launch the  
fund raising appeal for the Australian-Hellenic Memorial.

The Greek Conference, the Antipodes Festival and the  
Australian-Hellenic Memorial all serve to remind us how  
successful have been our joint efforts to build a  
multicultural society which seeks to create equality of  
opportunity for all Australians rather than isolated  
privilege for a few.

Those events of course remind us specifically of the size and importance of the contribution which people of Greek origin have made to the Australian community.

Since the beginning of European settlement Australia and Greece have shared many experiences. Like so many of our forebears did, Greeks first arrived in this country in 1829 as convicts.

Since then the Greek contribution to this nation has been felt and appreciated in virtually every industry and occupation and in virtually every town and city - and I am proud to say, it has been particularly strongly felt and appreciated in the Australian Labor Party.

Part of the reason for the success of this Greek contribution to Australia is that the relationship between Australia and Greece is based on our shared commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy - ideals which we honour in peacetime and for which we have, together, demonstrated we are willing to fight to preserve.

It is this aspect of our relationship we remember this evening.

To thousands of former Australian servicemen, the name Greece recalls the bloody days of 1941, when mainland Greece and the island of Crete became crucial battlefields in the fight against fascism.

The Australian-Hellenic Memorial is being constructed to commemorate all those who died in the Greek Campaign, both on the mainland and in the Battle for Crete.

It will also commemorate those who died at sea while serving with the Royal Australian Navy and the Merchant Marine in the Mediterranean. The Royal Australian Air Force, women of the nursing services, special covert forces, as well as those who died on Greek soil during World War 1, will also be commemorated.

And of very great significance, the Memorial will also recall the Greek civilians who risked their lives in helping Australian and other allied soldiers to safety and who, for these acts of heroism, frequently were harshly punished.

These terrible experiences Australians and Greeks shared during wartime at least had this lasting benefit - staunch friendships were forged in those dark days and they have endured and have been passed down to succeeding generations.

The members of the RSL have long treasured this friendship. The newly-formed Greek branch of the RSL in the ACT, and its active ladies auxiliary, are powerful evidence of this.

So when, Sir William, you approached the Government last year on behalf of the Australian veterans of the Greek campaign and the Greek community in Australia, with the

proposal to erect an Australian-Hellenic Memorial, we were pleased to do what we could to help.

We have made available a site for the Memorial at the top of Anzac Parade, opposite the War Memorial. I was proud to announce this last year on Anzac Day in Athens, and to receive the encouragement of Prime Minister Papandreu and the Greek Government.

Tonight, I am pleased to launch the Fund Raising Appeal for the construction of the Memorial.

The Australian-Hellenic Memorial Committee intends to raise all funds for the Memorial from the community without seeking the direct financial assistance of the Federal Government.

My Government will however be helping the Appeal. I am pleased to announce we have decided to make donations to this fund tax deductible until 31 July 1989.

Since the Committee is keen to encourage donations of \$10,000 or more, it has suggested that I sign certificates to be given to benefactors of such gifts. I am happy to do this.

In raising the funds for the Memorial, the ex-service and Greek communities in Australia intend that it be a presentation to the people of Australia in commemoration of those who fell in the cause of freedom.

It is expected that the Memorial be dedicated in May 1988 as a major Bicentennial activity and to coincide with the anniversary of the Battle for Crete.

The Australian-Hellenic Memorial will be certainly a fitting memorial to those who fought and who sacrificed their lives in the cause of freedom.

But it will be more: it will be a symbol of the lasting ties between two great peoples, ties of friendship in the past, ties regularly fortified today through the vigour and creativity of the Greek-Australian community, and ties which will endure into a shared and constructive future.

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